

Again, I thank all the people who have helped to put together this child support enforcement order. We will proceed to aggressively implement it.

Balanced Budget Amendment

Q. Mr. President, What's your reading on the balanced budget amendment in terms of passage?

The President. I think it's a close vote.

Q. How close?

Q. Have you talked to Senator Nunn yet?

The President. I've talked all the undecided Senators, to the best of my knowledge. I've talked to several, anyway.

Q. You think Nunn will hold out?

The President. I think I should let him speak for himself.

Q. What is it going to take to defeat it tomorrow?

The President. I think it depends upon what those undecided Senators believe is the right thing to do.

Q. Are you going to be meeting with any of them today or tomorrow, Mr. President? What will you be doing to try and head this thing on?

The President. I'm not sure. I've had extensive conversations with all of them. I don't know what else I'll be doing.

Chelsea Clinton's Birthday

Q. How are you going to celebrate Chelsea's birthday? Just a little offbeat.

The President. Well, we're going to have dinner tonight. You know, it's a school day. You don't get your birthday off at school. [Laughter]

Q. You're not going to be a deadbeat father, are you? [Laughter]

The President. I got up this morning, and we had a nice visit this morning for her birthday. But we're going to have—we're going to have a dinner. We're going to have a family dinner tonight to celebrate her birthday. And then after the press of her school activities clears, we'll probably have a little party for her. But she didn't want one tonight, so we're just going to have a family dinner.

Q. Can you raise a teenager in the White House? [Laughter]

The President. Well, I think she's doing very well. She's doing very well.

Thank you very much.

Lincoln-Douglas Sculpture

Q. And what are you doing with Lincoln and Douglas on your desk? Does that portend something?

The President. When C-Span came in here and did the interview for President's Day, they gave me that. I liked it a lot. And I met the people who played Lincoln and Douglas in the Galesburg, Illinois, debate when we were out there. I just liked it. I thought it looked good on the desk. Besides that, it reminds me that this town has always been about argument. [Laughter]

Thank you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 9:14 a.m. in the Oval Office at the White House. The Executive order is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks at the American Red Cross
February 27, 1995

Thank you very much, ladies and gentlemen, and thank you, Elizabeth Dole. Thank you for your remarks, and thank you especially for the strong leadership you have given to the Red Cross. In my own experience, I have watched you give it through hurricanes and earthquakes, through fires and floods, and I am delighted to be the honorary chairman of the American Red Cross and to be here at the start of the 1995 community campaign.

You know, when I became President, I spent a great deal of time early trying to make sure that the Federal Government could do its part in dealing with natural disasters. There had been so much criticism of the Federal disaster relief program before I took office. And we worked hard, and I think that everyone in America would admit that the Federal Emergency Management Agency is doing the best job it has perhaps ever done. But I can tell you this: We

never could have done what needed to be done for the American people had it not been for the Red Cross, in the floods in the Middle West, in California, all across the country.

I also can't help saying that on the way in here, Elizabeth, who never misses a chance to get you to do something else for the Red Cross—[laughter]—said, "Oh, by the way, on the way out, we're a little short in our blood drive, and would you mind making a public service announcement?" [Laughter] And I said, "No, I also wouldn't mind giving blood, and I think I should catch up." As a matter of fact, it occurred to me that I ought to—I could really require everyone—[laughter]—I could really require everyone at the White House to contribute, since they give blood every day every way. [Laughter] They might as well give it to the Red Cross and do some good.

I want to say, again, a special word of thanks to all of you who have been involved in the work of the Red Cross. I have, for several years now, said I thought what our country needed, in thinking about how we relate to each other, is the idea of a New Covenant, that we are entitled to more opportunity but we owe, each of us, more responsibility. We've got to build this country at the grassroots level, and that means we have to do it primarily as citizens, as private citizens with public spirits. That's what the Red Cross is all about. I have seen the Red Cross workers in Florida and in California and all those terrible States that were devastated in the Middle West.

I'm reminded of the example of Debbie Blanton, the head of the Red Cross chapter in Albany, Georgia. When the floods struck last summer there, her home was literally buried by water. But she and her husband, Joe, went to work right away, and the very next morning after the floods struck, they had already opened the first shelter in their area, even though they couldn't get to their own home. When I went down to Georgia a few days later, I met a lot of people, but I didn't meet her because she was too busy working on relief work. I'm happy to report that she and her husband moved back into their home just 4 days before Christmas.

Time and again I have seen the work of the Red Cross, as I said, all across the country. I remember what I saw in the flood-devastated areas in California recently. I saw the Red Cross there feeding families from mobile kitchens,

passing out blankets and emergency clothes, running shelters for displaced families.

As awful as they are, these natural disasters have a funny way of bringing out the best in us, neighbors helping neighbors to rebuild their communities and restore hope. If you go back to the beginning of our country or back to the wonderful writings of Alexis de Tocqueville, you see that the keenest observers of America have always said that our ability to associate with people different from ourselves to work for common purpose is the great strength of this country. For more than a century, the Red Cross has led the way in that endeavor. I only wish that we could find a way to do on a daily basis what the Red Cross helps us to do when disaster strikes.

For service men and women the world over, the Red Cross means a helping hand or a word from home. For hospital patients, it means the world's safest blood supply. For people in need, it means a hot meal, a warm bed, a hope for a better future. So for many others, the Red Cross is terribly important not just in times of disaster but when problems strike them or needs plague them day-in and day-out.

I want to take a moment, if I might, to recognize two young people who are here today who represent the strong partnership in disaster response between the Red Cross and AmeriCorps, our national service program. Johnny Jones and Beverly Beyer were trained by you, the Red Cross. They've worked side by side with the Red Cross when disaster struck in Idaho during fires and Houston after the flood. I'm proud of them and the spirit of voluntarism they represent. I'd like them to raise their hands and be recognized. There they are. Thank you very much. [Applause]

Now I have to do what Elizabeth sent me here to do, the sales pitch. [Laughter] Because the truth is that for all the work the Red Cross does, none of it can happen without the generous support of the American people, without the million and a half volunteers, the millions of financial contributors, and yes, the blood donors.

So I urge all Americans to keep up your support, to give your time, to give your money, to give your blood, because, as the saying is this year, "Help Can't Wait." I hope the American people will continue to live out the ideals of the Red Cross and be good neighbors every day.

Thank you very much, and God bless you.

NOTE: The President spoke at 11:26 a.m. on the lawn at Red Cross headquarters. Following his re-

marks and a tour of displays, he signed the American Red Cross Month proclamation, which is listed in Appendix D at the end of this volume.

Remarks Commemorating the First Anniversary of the Brady Law and an Exchange With Reporters

February 28, 1995

The President. Thank you very much. Mr. Vice President, Mr. Secretary, Madam Attorney General, Commissioner Lovitt, and my friend Jim, congratulations. Happy anniversary.

You know, I'd like to begin by saying a special word about Jim Brady. He dedicated his life to public service. In no small measure because of that dedication, 14 years ago his life was in danger and his life changed forever. In spite of all the hardship and the pain that followed, he never looked back but instead decided he should fight on, determined to do his part to prevent the tragedy that struck him from striking other people. More than any other person in the United States, we celebrate today the courage and determination of Jim Brady, and we are in his debt.

Thank you, sir.

James Brady. Thank you, sir.

The President. You know, Jim and Sarah Brady represent in so many ways the kind of citizen action I talked about in the State of the Union Address, the New Covenant: moral responsibility along with more opportunity and people sparking grassroots movements across this country. I am committed to this law and committed to what it represents. You know, our big problems here in Washington often stem from the fact that we don't think about what promotes responsibility and what creates opportunity and what enables people to make the most of their own lives. The Brady bill does all that.

A crucial part of our job here in Washington is to help arm the American people, through our police officers, to fight crime and violence. The Brady law, in that sense, is one of the things that I'm proudest of that has happened since I have been President. We put an end to 7 years of politics-as-usual, of people saying one thing and doing another, when the Brady

law passed. It's not a complex piece of legislation, but it took 7 years, 7 years, to pass the Congress.

And all the naysayers talked about how terrible it would be. Well, now we know that, as the Secretary said, over 40,000 convicted felons, fugitives, drug dealers, gang members, stalkers, were prevented from purchasing handguns in the Brady law's first 11 months. I should point out that the real national number is bigger than that because, as you know, there are some States that have companion laws that go along with that. And the estimates are that, nationwide in the States with Brady-like laws and the Brady law, the total is more like 70,000.

A recent study says that, as the Secretary said, that that's only 3.5 percent of all the people who buy handguns. And as he said, it's kind of like airport metal detectors. I think 97 percent of us should be willing to wait a while, so that the 3 percent of us who are trying to buy guns for the wrong reasons can be stopped. Three percent of the American people buying guns for the wrong reasons can do a phenomenal amount of damage, and stopping them can do a phenomenal amount of good, can keep a lot of citizens alive, and it can keep an awful lot of law enforcement officials alive.

There are thousands of examples around the country, but let me just cite one or two. In March of 1994, the Brady law stopped a handgun purchase by a man in Kansas under a restraining order for allegedly stalking his wife and threatening to kill her. In April, the law led to the arrest of a suspected drug dealer in Texas with outstanding warrants for possession of cocaine and heroin with intent to distribute. In November, it helped to catch two gang members, both convicted felons, who traveled all the way from California to Nevada to purchase weapons.